

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electrosurgical instrument for applying electrical energy to tissue at a target site, the instrument comprising:
a tissue-contacting surface; and
at least one active electrode recessed within the tissue-contacting surface and having a curved configuration.
2. The instrument of claim 1 further comprising:
a return electrode spaced apart from the at least one active electrode.
3. The instrument of claim 2 further comprising:
a fluid source for providing electrically conductive fluid between the return electrode and the at least one active electrode; and
one or more connectors coupled to the at least one active electrode for connecting the active electrodes to a high frequency power supply.
4. The instrument of claim 1 further comprising:
at least one opening within the tissue-contacting surface for venting the target site.
5. The instrument of claim 4 wherein the at least one opening is concentric with the at least one active electrode.
6. The instrument of claim 1 further comprising:
at least one recess within the tissue-contacting surface for facilitating fluid flow to the at least one active electrode.
7. The instrument of claim 1 wherein the at least one active electrode is positioned within a cavity within the tissue-contacting surface.
8. The instrument of claim 1 wherein the at least one active electrode is flush with the tissue-contacting surface.

9. The instrument of claim 1 wherein the at least one active electrode is recessed below the tissue-contacting surface.
10. The instrument of claim 2 wherein the return electrode is positioned about the tissue-contacting surface.
11. The instrument of claim 1 wherein the at least one active electrode has an annular configuration.
12. An electrosurgical instrument for applying electrical energy to tissue at a target site, the instrument comprising:
 - a shaft, a proximal end and a distal end;
 - a tissue treatment member at the distal end, the tissue treatment member having an annular configuration and comprising:
 - a tissue-contacting surface;
 - an outer surface; and
 - an active electrode having an annular configuration and recessed within the tissue-contacting surface.
13. The instrument of claim 12 further comprising:
 - a return electrode having an annular configuration and positioned about the outer surface.
14. The instrument of claim 13 further comprising:
 - a fluid source for providing electrically conductive fluid between the return electrode and the at least one active electrode; and
 - one or more connectors coupled to the at least one active electrode for connecting the active electrodes to a high frequency power supply.
15. The instrument of claim 12 wherein the annular configuration of the tissue treatment member defines an opening for venting the target site.
16. The instrument of claim 12 wherein the tissue treatment member further comprises at least one recess therein for facilitating fluid flow to the at least one active electrode.

17. The instrument of claim 12 wherein the at least one active electrode is flush with the tissue-contacting surface.

18. The instrument of claim 12 wherein the at least one active electrode is recessed below the tissue-contacting surface.

19. The instrument of claim 13 wherein the outer surface extends beyond return electrode to define an active portion of the tissue treatment member adjacent the active electrode.

20. An electrosurgical instrument for applying electrical energy to tissue at a target site, the instrument comprising:

- a shaft, a proximal end and a distal end;
- a non-electrically conducting support disposed at the distal end, said support having an annular configuration and a tissue-contacting surface having an annular recess therein;
- an active electrode positioned within the annular recess; and
- a return electrode positioned about an outer surface of said support

21. The instrument of claim 20 wherein said support comprises ceramic.

22. The instrument of claim 21 wherein said return electrode has a clip shape.

23. The instrument of claim 22 having only one active electrode.